

Sinclair Broadcasting's plan to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary just before the election is, as the New York Times puts it today, something reminiscent of "the plot of a bad political novel, or an actual election in post-Soviet Russia." This film labels Senator Kerry a liar, a traitor and a "willing accomplice" of the enemy during the Vietnam War. It's not news, and it makes no attempt at balance or fairness. Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies control the media, there is a greater threat of huge abuses like this one and we get less of the news we need to have an informed electorate--which is the basis of legitimate democracy. Sinclair's actions are yet more evidence for the need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them.